

## **MUNICIPAL GROWTH ELEMENT: A STRATEGY FOR GROWTH**

The Municipal Growth Element (MGE) is a required element for municipalities in their comprehensive plans through House Bill 1141 that was passed in 2006. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that communities are realistically planning for growth, that they can serve that growth with public facilities and resources, and they are able to identify the inherent costs to the public. Through the requirement of an MGE, the State is ensuring that all communities are responsibly assessing land annexation for accommodating growth, can serve that growth, and are successfully coordinating with the counties in which they are located.

This element, or chapter, is designed to provide a detailed and quantitative analysis of the City's anticipated growth over the next twenty years based on a capacity analysis of the areas identified for development. As per the Maryland Department of Planning, this is to assist counties and municipalities to fully consider the capacity of land use, public services, infrastructure, costs, and financing associated with growth before committing resources, and it is intended to help direct future growth in a rational, predictable manner. This element is the basis for making decisions regarding any future expansion through new residential growth and how those decisions relate to future costs borne by local governments and their citizens.

As required by HB 1141, this chapter includes the following sections:

- Anticipated future municipal growth areas outside the existing corporate limits of the municipal corporation
- Past growth patterns
- The capacity of land areas available for development within the municipal corporation, including in-fill and redevelopment
- The land area needed to satisfy demand for development at densities consistent with the long-term development policy
- Public services and infrastructure needed to accommodate growth, including public schools, libraries, public safety, water and sewerage facilities, stormwater management systems, and recreation
- Financing mechanisms
- Rural buffers and transition areas
- Burden on services and infrastructure
- Protection of sensitive areas
- Relationship of long-term development policy to a vision of a city's future character.

The MGE works in tandem with the Land Use and Community Facilities chapters to ensure that the land use decisions are coordinated with the need for additional community facilities as well as anticipate the need for additional infrastructure and personnel. These topics are extremely important when talking about a city's future – what City stakeholders want this City to look like and function like in the future, to ensure that the City's visions are met, and that development takes into account impacts to public services and costs for extension of water and sewer service.

According to the U. S. Decennial Census data from 2020, the City's population is 14,807, an increase of 1,855 residents from 2010. Census data from 2010 had the City's population at 12,952 which is a 10-year change of 14.32% or 1.43 annual growth. This is due to major building activity as a result of the City incorporating large land areas through annexation for residential development. Over the past 25 years, the City has annexed just over 1,600 acres<sup>1</sup>, largely for residential development. The location of these annexations were to the west of the historic town center as Havre de Grace is bounded by the Susquehanna River to the east, Chesapeake Bay to the south, and large hard rock quarry to the north. These tracts were large rural parcels immediately adjacent to City limits which could easily be served by public utilities and provided a natural progression for the City's growth.

Expansion of the City largely began with the annexation of large land tracts west of the City in 1998. Major parcels were added and the City grew from 3.39 square miles in land area in 1998 to the current 5.90 square miles, or approximately 75%. The map, Annexations Since 1990, shows the annexed properties in ten year intervals, telling the story of growth but with a focus on development within the past 25 years; the year 1998 was the start of major land annexations, also shown on the map. Wastewater treatment plant capacity upgrades were planned in tandem with these major annexations and completed by 2010.

Over the next 20 years, the City will be focusing on the successful build-out of the residential neighborhoods already under construction and areas like the I-95 interchange Mixed Office Employment as shown in the Land Use chapter, areas that have already been annexed. Limited growth opportunities exist along US 40 for commercial and mixed-use projects, and the City will be focusing attention on significant redevelopment projects. These redevelopment projects include UM Harford Memorial Hospital in the heart of the Old Town revitalization area and the former Tranquility Townhomes site.

#### **Anticipated Future Municipal Growth Areas Outside of Existing Corporate Limits**

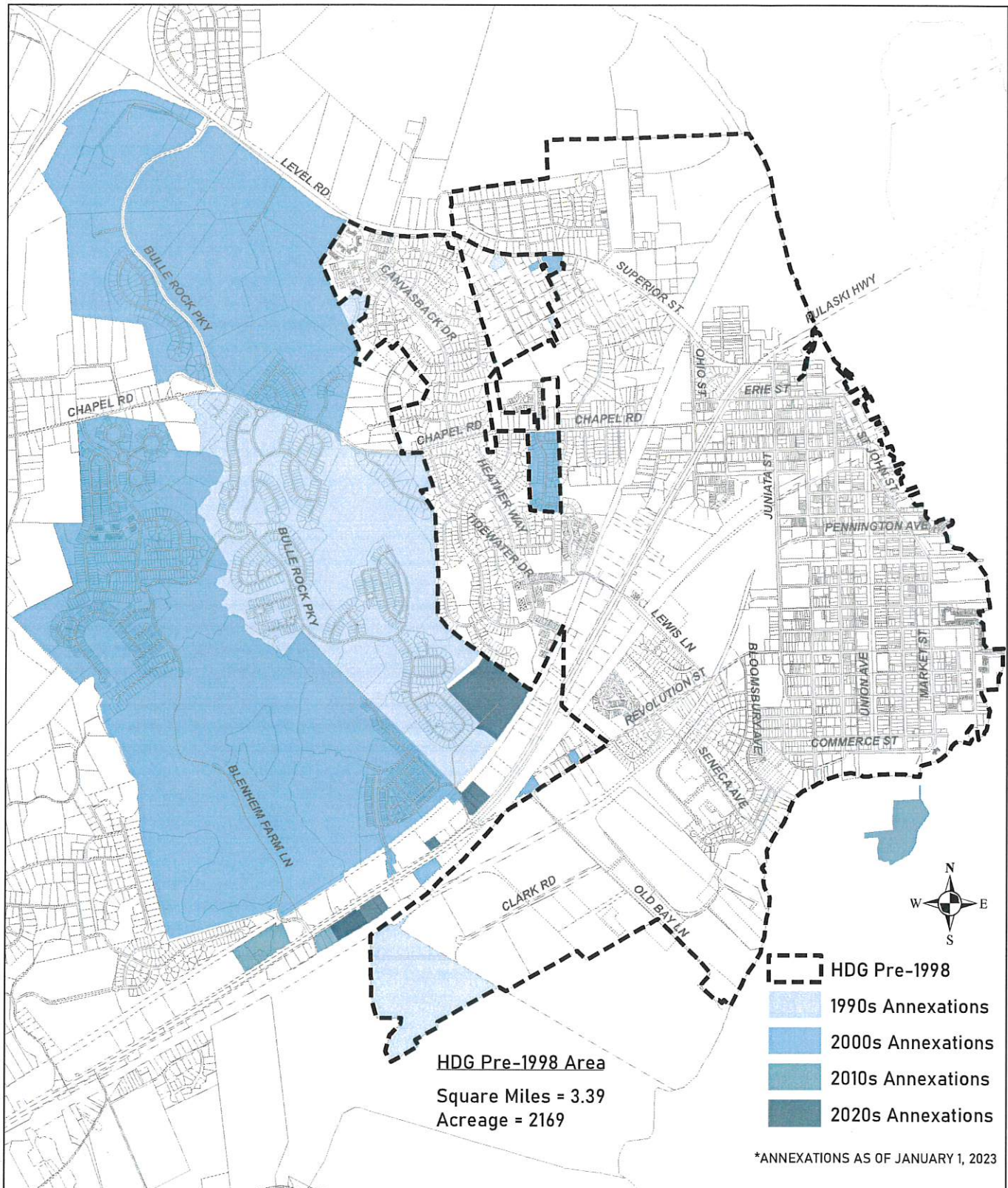
With the exception of parcels along US 40, there is limited opportunity for growth outside of the current City boundary. The Land Use Plan map depicts developing areas as opposed to growth areas and the City's focus needs to be on the successful buildout of those areas. Identified growth areas are limited to US 40, Sections 1 and 2 where extension of water and sewer services can be achieved. New commercial expansion and redevelopment of existing underutilized parcels is desired to make a cohesive corridor for service, retail, and office uses. Development buildout may also include mixed-use with residential similar

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<sup>1</sup> Actual amount of land annexed into the City of Havre de Grace since 1998 is 1,606.144 acres or 2.51 sq. miles.



# ANNEXATIONS SINCE 1990



to Blenheim Run, an affordable housing project being constructed by Green Street Housing. Continued extension of water and sewer to serve properties along US 40 makes sense environmentally and functionally.

This Comprehensive Plan reduces the planning boundaries from recent past plans where proposed boundaries reached as far west Earlton and Robinhood Roads. This is a result of the boundaries created by GHD *Havre de Grace Citywide Water System Hydraulic Model Update and Hydraulic Analysis* which was completed in January 2021. This GHD study determined the planning boundaries for water infrastructure specifically as related to the pending sale of finished water to the City of Aberdeen and refined them, recognizing limitations of the City's ability to serve those areas due to treatment plant capacity. The only other identified growth areas are those that are already developed but are currently served by wells and septic systems and may need public water and sewer in the future.

### **Past Growth Patterns**

Havre de Grace developed as a colonial era water-centered settlement with a ferry linking the eastern and western shores of Maryland in the late 1600's. It was platted in 1782 and the grid-patterned streets of the historic areas remain as originally configured with wider primary streets of Union and Congress Avenues. Havre de Grace was truly a planned city and that plan expanded in 1799 with a beautifully hand-drawn map of navigable waters, land survey, and inset of the expanded town by C. P. Hauducoeur. This map formed the basis for expansion of the City with remnants of the boundary still surviving. The Susquehanna and Tidewater Canal (1840) and early railroad connections (1837) made this the mercantile center for Harford County made evident by stately historic homes and established downtown business district.

Early coastal routes such as The Old Post Road (MD 7) through the center of town defined the City's relationship to the rest of rural Harford County and the region until the construction of US 40 was completed in 1940, which connected urban Baltimore with Atlantic City, New Jersey. Highway commercial, replete with lodging and restaurants for travelers, was the typical development along this thoroughfare. US 40 was built on the edge of town and effectively bypassed it at the time; it also came to define later residential development and its relationship with the older sections of Havre de Grace in the sense that the highway provided a division between the older portions of the City and newer post-war neighborhoods. With its opening in 1963, the construction of I-95 again bypassed Havre de Grace a mile from the edge of the city-limits. I-95 defines the outermost edge of the City's boundary today as well as Harford County's Development Envelope, its urban growth boundary.



Residential development occurred in concentric rings around the old town core, moving north and westward away from the waterfront, the only direction that the City could grow. Havre de Grace had well-paced growth in the decades following World War II and development followed expected patterns of the times, whether in elongated grids or later, more organic cul-de-sac configuration. Just as the rest of Harford County had major subdivisions built in a development surge in the 1980's, Havre de Grace had large-scale neighborhoods emerge "up on the hill", such as Grace Harbour and Bay View Estates. These developments were designed in the typical suburban subdivision fashion of single family and townhouse residences with curvilinear road networks. They brought an influx of families into the community and provided a place to grow at a time of generalized population expansion county-wide.



In the past 25 years, Havre de Grace has experienced a surge of residential growth with several large subdivisions taking place. Bulle Rock, a large planned golf course community, was designed as a mixed residential community with a combination of single family homes, villas, and condominiums. It was a well-planned community with significant amenities, like trail systems for golf carts and pedestrian use. As the City's largest subdivision at over 2100 units, Bulle Rock is still being built-out. Other large projects include Greenway Farm with its bridge entrance off US 40 – currently with Phase 2 of 3 being developed -- and Scenic Manor on Chapel Road, now complete. Remaining large-scale residential projects are located closest to the I-95/MD 155 interchange which include Sion Hill Estates and The Legacies subdivisions. Havre de Grace like other towns and small cities, have been the focus of Maryland's Smart Growth initiative which concentrates new development where it can be supported by water, sewer, and road/highway infrastructure.

#### **Capacity of Land Area Available for Development**

As of January 1, 2023, there is development capacity for approximately 1,685 new residential units within the City<sup>2</sup>, which includes the buildout potential for Greenway Farms, The Residences of Bulle Rock, Blenheim Run, Green/Ianniello/Patrone annexed property, and residential infill. This does not include the potential redevelopment of UM Harford Memorial Hospital property due to the fact that project density is unknown at this time.

The following table shows the residential development capacity for Havre de Grace as of January 1, 2023. Please note that this information reflects known and estimated development capacity based on permit applications at the start of 2023. Some project totals may be subject to change or future refinement as projects are submitted for review and approval.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on Residential Development Capacity reporting to Maryland Department of Planning, January 2023

| PROJECT NAME   | NUMBER OF DWELLINGS |
|--|---------------------|
| Residential In-fill Factor                                     | 75 units            |
| The Residences at Bulle Rock – mixed residential types         | 569 units           |
| Greenway Farms, townhouse project                              | 284 units           |
| Blenheim Run, affordable housing apartment project (111 total) | 60 units            |
| Lampson Property, single-family detached homes                 | 40 units            |
| Bloomsbury Park  | 150 units*          |
| Juniata at Superior Street                                     | 7 units             |
| Sion Hill Estates  | 140 units           |
| Green Property, single-family detached and townhomes           | 260 units*          |
| Ianiello Property, townhomes and multi-family                  | 100 units*          |
| <b>TOTAL ESTMATED RESIDENTIAL CAPACITY</b>                     | <b>1,685</b>        |

\* These are estimated number of units

Over the past 10 years, the permit activity for new residential construction has had a range from 34 to 129 units with an average of 73 units per year. With this average in mind, the City has over 20 years of development capacity remaining.<sup>3</sup>

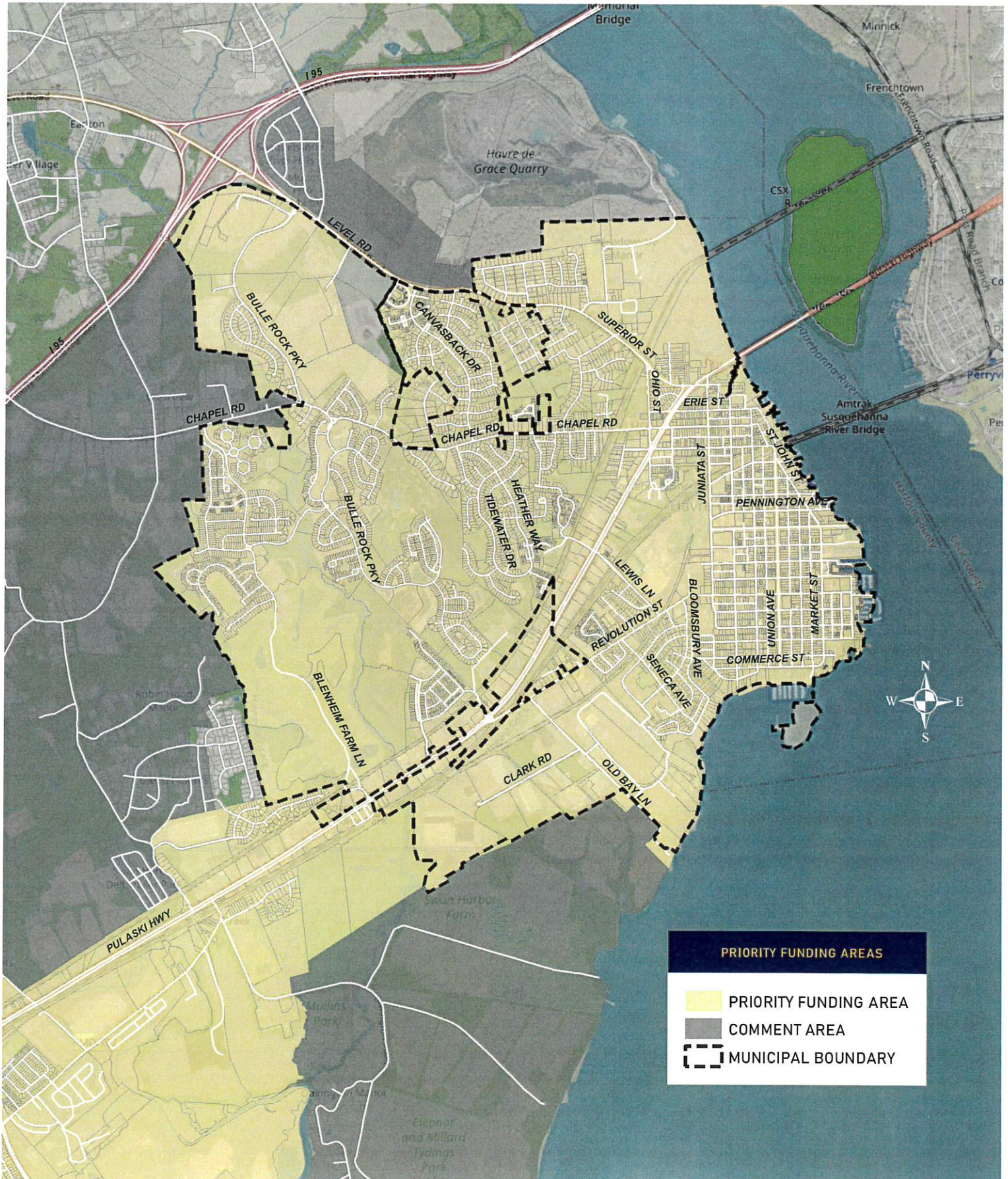
Because of the large annexations over the past 25 years, Havre de Grace has incorporated the land area needed to satisfy demand for residential development at densities consistent with long-term policy. Areas that were annexed are consistent with State Smart Growth policies and meet the requirements of Priority Funding Area (PFA) designation, to include: the extension of water and sewer service to those areas; densities that achieve 3.5 units per acre; that the growth plan is consistent with projections; and that the PFA size is large enough to meet 20 years for projected growth. Please see map for Priority Funding Areas included in this chapter.

State Smart growth policy is based on concentrating development in those areas where infrastructure – such as roads and public water and sewer services – already exists. In addition, the City development policies are in keeping with Harford County development policies where higher density growth is directed to the Development Envelope. Major opportunities exist in this region for serving the residential growth needs due to the City's proximity to APG. Our combined regional efforts with the support of Harford

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<sup>3</sup> Actual build-out based on past 10-year rate is 23 years. The residential development capacity does not include any potential redevelopment of the current UM Harford Memorial Hospital site.







County Government need to be based in Smart Growth ideals which concentrate development in these areas with public water and sewer and where the existing road network can handle increased traffic.

#### **Land Area Needed to Satisfy Demand for Development at Densities Consistent with the Long-Term Development Policy**

The long-term development policy is to successfully serve the areas already incorporated into City-limits through development buildout. Additional residential capacity may be gained in future annexations along US 40 for mixed-use type projects like Blenheim Run, but the City will have to be mindful of the capacity at both the water and wastewater treatment plants as this occurs. Plant capacities will be the limiting factor for growth beyond the City's 20-year buildout.

In this Comprehensive Plan update, the City's planned growth boundary actually shrunk slightly due to GHD water study referenced earlier in this chapter. The focus must be on ensuring that areas already incorporated are served by water and sewer infrastructure and plant capacities. The only other areas may be along US 40 where appropriate for mixed-use development which, at this time is the limit of the City's planned growth areas.

#### **Public Services and Infrastructure Needed**

Since the last update of the Comprehensive Plan in 2010 and the first required Municipal Growth Element, Havre de Grace has grown considerably. Enhanced nutrient removal and capacity upgrades had been completed at the wastewater treatment plant at that time and schools in the area were well under-capacity. The City embraced growth and is now at a point that its boundaries are relatively set and focused on ensuring its commitment to serve the areas already annexed. The City is no longer under- capacity.

Updates to the Havre de Grace Branch of the Harford County Public Library were welcomed in 2016 and much-needed upgrades to the City's water treatment plant were completed in 2022. In addition, the City boasts the newest secondary school – opened in 2021 – which is a combined middle school and high school with state-of-the art facilities. However, major infrastructure improvements are necessary to complete the growth policy established, specifically as related to water distribution in developing areas near the I-95 interchange.

This section of the MGE will describe public services needed to accommodate growth, including public schools, libraries, public safety, water and sewerage facilities, stormwater management, and recreation. For more information on these facilities please see the *Community Facilities* and the *Water Resources Element* chapters of this plan.

#### **Schools**

Facility development, operations, and funding for all public schools come under the control of Harford County Public Schools and the Harford County Board of Education. Ten years ago, the City's schools were well under-capacity but due to the growth they are at or over-capacity. This has triggered measures for



redistricting secondary schools in this region for the 2022/2023 school year. More significant redistricting will take place for elementary schools in the 2026/2027 school year where students within City-limits will be attending the neighboring Roye-William Elementary School. Modifications for elementary school boundaries will affect 3 area schools during this redistricting process – Havre de Grace, Meadowvale, and Roye-Williams. Charts showing actual and projected utilization for primary and secondary schools serving Havre de Grace are provided in the *Community Facilities* chapter which also includes links to the Harford County Public Schools website for balancing enrollment. Please see that chapter for a full discussion.

The Havre de Grace community is grateful and proud of its middle school/high school complex located on Lewis Lane and central to the City. The aging facilities of both of the prior middle and high school buildings necessitated the rebuilding of both in a combined facility. The complex was completed during the COVID-19 shutdown and opened for students in the spring of 2021 when students were allowed to return to in-person classes. The complex was well-designed with walkability and solar gain in-mind.

### **Libraries**

Due to the volume of activity at this location, the Havre de Grace Branch of the Harford County Library was redeveloped on the corner of Union and Pennington Avenues, with construction completed in 2016. This branch grew from 9,000 square feet to 21,000 square feet in area and is now 3 levels, which include: community meeting rooms and offices on the first floor; the main library stacks, periodicals, computer resources, and early literacy and teen room on the second floor; and a flyover with more volumes and a hands-on learning center as its third floor. The new building was replaced with a larger facility due to the high usage and circulation rate as well as its central location within walking distance of the downtown, schools, and neighborhoods. Its level of activity and residential growth predicated its replacement and the City benefits greatly from the new library. All branches of the public library system are operated by Harford County Government and direct coordination occurred to ensure that this well-utilized facility was expanded to accommodate the City's growth.

### **Public Safety: Medical, Fire and Rescue, and Police Protection**

Havre de Grace is well provisioned in regard to public safety with emergency medical services of the Havre de Grace Ambulance Corps; fire and rescue consisting of five divisions of the Susquehanna Hose Company; the Havre de Grace Police Department. Volunteer personnel and Police Department staff are supported by the Harford County Government Emergency Operations Center (EOC) located in Hickory for communications and response. The EOC is central to the County for dispatch, emergency preparedness, and hazardous material response.

The Havre de Grace Ambulance Corps is an all-volunteer organization responsible for 911 emergency medical and trauma response. A separate organization from fire and rescue, the Havre de Grace Ambulance Corps has a modern facility located on MD 155 (1601 Level Road) with five equipment bays, administrative offices, bunk rooms, crew area, classrooms, and storage. Over 60 members provide emergency medical response to the local citizenry as well as providing mutual aid to jurisdictions within Harford County and Cecil County. Volunteer members with support from paid staff from Harford County consist of a mix of advanced life support (ALS) patient care providers, IV technicians, and basic life support

(BLS) patient care providers. The ambulance and support fleet includes 8 vehicles, including two ALS equipped ambulances and other support vehicles for both advanced life support and basic life support.

Since 1902, the Susquehanna Hose Company (SHCO) has proudly provided fire and rescue response for Havre de Grace and the surrounding region. As with the Ambulance Corps, Havre de Grace is fortunate to have the dedicated, all-volunteer organization that provides for the City's public safety for emergency rescue and fire. Due to the fact that SHCO has five divisions and houses within municipal limits, they have an extremely fast response time. SHCO is rated by the Insurance Services Office (ISO) as a Class 1 fire department, which is impressive for an all-volunteer fire department. This is due to their operations and efficiency, the water system within the City, and 911 emergency dispatch for Harford County. This rating will reduce insurance premiums for residents and businesses within Havre de Grace.

In addition to the equipped building facilities located throughout town, SHCO operates five engines, one tower (a specialized ladder truck for multi-story structures), one quint (ladder truck), one rescue unit, a mini-pumper, three boats, a dive unit, a swift water unit, and four utility vehicles. Specialized units within the Company include a dive team and swift water rescue unit, which is part of Harford County's Tactical Rescue Team. The Harford County Tactical Rescue Team maintains units for various rescue needs, with the emphasis on Havre de Grace for water search and rescue as well as rescue during flood events.

The Havre de Grace Police Department includes 36 full-time sworn officers and 9 civilian staff for dispatch, communication, and central records. Centrally located in Havre de Grace on Pennington Avenue next to City Hall, the Department is housed in a modern facility built in 2001. Like SHCO, quick emergency response time – generally less than three minutes – is a tremendous asset for City residents requiring police services. The City's facilities within the Police Department building include a communications and dispatch area, a duty officer's room and officers' work area, records management, processing areas, evidence room, administration offices, and a community meeting space that can operate as an emergency operations center in case of a large-scale public emergency or natural disaster. Generators are located on-site that serve as backup for operating both the Police Department and City Hall in case of a power failure. In addition, the City has its own firing range in a remote area of the City that provides space for firearms training to local police departments as well as Federal and State agencies. Police vehicles are equipped with mobile data terminals, providing information through a national crime database.

The Havre de Grace Police Department consists of Patrol, Criminal Investigation, and Administrative Divisions. Personnel growth within City government has been focused on public safety and particularly the Police Department. This was required due to the expansion of the City (i.e. larger geographic area/response time/coverage) and subsequent population growth, allowing for additional staff coverage per shift. In addition, the Police Department is expanding its ability to process serious crime scene evidence through a forensics evidence unit. The Havre de Grace Police Department is supported by other agencies in the region, such as the Harford County Sheriff's Department, the Aberdeen Police Department, the Maryland State Police, Maryland Transportation Authority Police, and numerous Federal agencies through mutual aid agreements. Both Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) and Records Management Systems (RMS) are County-wide and common to all law enforcement agencies.



Several circumstances in Havre de Grace are unique from a public safety standpoint. The City is adjacent to major interstate roads, rail lines, and bridge structures that require extra measures of preparedness for major emergencies. As a waterfront community, Havre de Grace is subject to tidal surge flooding as well as from major rain events flooding interior waterways. This adds a natural hazard element to the local public safety agencies' missions not typical of most communities as well as requiring specialized services for rescues, drownings, and water-related emergencies.

In general, public safety-related facilities have kept pace with the City's growth and demand, and continual facility and equipment updates are important for the community's public safety. Much of the funding for volunteer organizations is provided through Harford County Government's capital budget process. Contributions also come from the City of Havre de Grace and local fundraising efforts by the organizations themselves. County agencies, such as the Emergency Operations Center, are funded through the Harford County Government, where cyclical upgrades based on technology improvements are paramount for integrated, interoperable communications. The Havre de Grace Police Department, on the other hand, is funded primarily through the City's budget for operations and capital requirements. These funds come from a variety of sources, to include real property taxes and other taxes, grant funds and local aid, and other intergovernmental sources.

Volunteer recruitment and training is critical to sustaining emergency response, and Havre de Grace is very proud of its volunteer organizations which serve the immediate community and the region in such an essential public safety capacity. The City is dependent on generous volunteers for vital services in medical emergencies, fire, rescue, and natural disaster. The City is equally proud of its hardworking, professional, and highly-trained police staff, who keep the community safe around the clock and who perform fundamental public services on a daily basis.

On a down note, the changing face of hospital services in Havre de Grace has the community concerned. University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Health (UM UCH) is shutting down the hospital that has existed in Havre de Grace since 1912 and is consolidating all acute care at the Bel Air location. To support this southeastern region of the county, UM UCH is opening a freestanding medical facility and behavioral health hospital in nearby Aberdeen, but it is not the same as having medical facilities located within the immediate community. This transition is expected in the fall of 2023. Of concern is the desire for more direct access to hospital services for which the City has enjoyed for over a century as well as the issue of transport of accident trauma victims due to the proximity to I-95 to a full-service care hospital.

#### **Water and Sewerage Facilities**

The systems related to water and sewer infrastructure and capacity are continually being assessed to ensure that they are running as smoothly and efficiently as possible. Located at the south end of the City and discharging into the Chesapeake Bay, the wastewater treatment was upgraded in 2010 with enhanced nutrient removal (ENR) and capacity improvements for accommodating growth. It is rated with a permitted capacity of 3.3 million gallons per day (gpd). The water treatment plant is located on St. John Street with intakes in the Susquehanna River as its surface water source. This plant had major

upgrades completed in 2022 and has a permitted capacity of 3.7 million gpd. Both of these plants are operated with licensed and skilled personnel and run 24 hours a day.

With regard to wastewater treatment plant capacity and collection system, the City currently utilizes 1,702,250 gpd and has a remaining capacity of approximately 1.6 million gpd for growth.<sup>4</sup> Anticipated future demand with all build-out is calculated to be 573,431 gpd so the plant will have a remaining capacity of 31% at the currently anticipated build-out. This is under the capacity that would trigger greater oversight by Maryland Department of Environment, which is 80%. As far as the wastewater collection system, extension of service improvements are done during time of development and Department of Public Works crews repair and replace aging sewer lines as needed.

With regard to water supply, treatment, and distribution, the City currently utilizes 1,723,600 gpd and has a remaining capacity of 1,976,400 gpd. Anticipated future demand with all build-out is calculated to be 1,446,267 gpd, which includes the sale of 500,000 gallons of finished water to the City of Aberdeen. With the commitment to supplying finished water to Aberdeen as well as development growth, major capital improvements are needed for water systems operation. The City is working through this with assistance from GHD Engineering for developing a project list and schedule for water systems improvements through its capital improvement program. This is particularly necessary with development near the I-95 interchange. As far as water line distribution system, crews maintain a list of planned capital improvements for replacement and upgrading for water larger volume. Again, there are aging lines and control valves in need of repair.

### **Stormwater Management Systems**

Havre de Grace has remained current in its requirement for stormwater management as State law has changed through the decades, with the last passage of updated stormwater management ordinance in 2010, as required. The ordinance adopts more restrictive compliance criteria mandated by the State of Maryland's 2007 Stormwater Management Act. The City adopted its first stormwater management ordinance in 1984 with the purpose of reducing stream channel erosion, pollution, siltation and sedimentation, and local flooding<sup>5</sup>.

Implemented by the Department of Public Works through plan approval authority, stormwater management facilities were required to be designed for quantitative and qualitative control of stormwater runoff. Early development projects that required stormwater management plans were Chapel Heights, Grace Harbour, and Bayview Estates. The land was graded to accommodate stormwater management ponds which were built to retain stormwater runoff within a neighborhood during a rain or snow event.

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<sup>4</sup> This is based on May 2023 Water Appropriation revision analysis which includes most recent capacity calculations for both water and wastewater treatment plants. Actual remaining capacity for the wastewater treatment plant is 1,597,750 gpd.

<sup>5</sup> Ordinance No. 675, Stormwater Management, enacted 6/4/84 and effective 7/1/84.



Driven by State law, stormwater management requirements have evolved since they were first adopted in the 1980's. The City adopted an updated ordinance in 2002 based on the State model which repealed all past stormwater management ordinances including minor refinements to ensure that the City was current with State law administered through Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). The State passed the Stormwater Management Act of 2007 where regulations were again formulated by MDE. These regulations refined stormwater collection and soil infiltration during storm events so that developed land imitates a more natural condition, like those areas that remain forested. This progressive approach to stormwater management is called environmental site design and is driven by the need to make substantial improvements to the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay. (Please see the *Water Resources Element* chapter for more in-depth information regarding stormwater management.)

### **Recreation**

Havre de Grace has many varied types of recreational facilities available to its citizens – vast regional parks, recreation complexes with playing fields, and an excellent array of smaller municipal parks unique to the region. Within the region, there are the very large regional facilities of Susquehanna State Park, Swan Harbor Farm, and Eleanor and Millard Tydings Park tract that are publicly-owned and provide over sixteen hundred acres of waterfront open space to the north and south of Havre de Grace. The City itself has many waterfront parks which provide public access to the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay to include: McLhinney, North, Jean Roberts, David Craig, Frank Hutchins, and the entire cultural district with Concord Point Lighthouse, Havre de Grace Maritime Museum, Decoy Museum, and Tydings Park. These are all connected through sidewalks and marked trails along the City's waterfront.

City residents have the benefit of several generous recreational areas with active playing fields, to include the centrally-located middle and high school complex within the City, a multi-field recreational area being constructed on Chapel Road, and the playing fields at Gravel Hill. Havre de Grace itself also has some excellent regional trail features, such as the Promenade and waterfront pedestrian walkways through old town, the North Park Loop Trail, the Lafayette Historic Trail, bikeways through the City, and connections to the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway and East Coast Greenway. In addition, privately-owned facilities which serve the community include Bulle Rock Golf Course, the Havre de Grace Little League at Stancill Field, and several marinas.

With a State standard of thirty acres of recreational/open space land per one thousand people (2020 census population of 14,807), Havre de Grace is in excellent shape. The region has a generous amount of open space for both passive and active recreation – passive for quiet enjoyment of nature (with trail systems included) and active recreation such as playing fields and recreation complexes. Havre de Grace exceeds acreage requirements with those large public parks adjacent to the City. Multi-use playing fields for active group-sport participation are also adequate however there is always a need for increased acreage in these types of facilities due to high usage. Major complexes include the middle school/high school recreational area with multi-use fields and baseball/softball diamonds and the Chapel Road site where fields are being developed. Meadowvale and Havre de Grace Elementary Schools, as well as nearby Royce-Williams Elementary and Gravel Hill Park, also provide field space for the City's team sport

recreational needs. In addition, the Havre de Grace Activity Center – a multi-agency facility which includes Harford County Department of Parks and Recreation, a senior center, and the Havre de Grace Boys & Girls Club – provides indoor recreational space for citizens of all ages.

Playgrounds are interspersed throughout Havre de Grace in both the older and the newer communities. Some small playgrounds are owned and maintained by homeowners associations, others are provided on school property, and several are owned and maintained by the City itself, such as the Tydings Park playground overlooking the Chesapeake Bay. Responsible agencies work hard to maintain the existing facilities and to allocate funds to keep them up-to-date, which is a constant effort. These are important features in the community landscape, providing beneficial activity in an urban setting. As mentioned above, trails feature heavily in Havre de Grace and are part of a long-term effort to incorporate hiking and biking options in this beautiful region. Pedestrian accessibility and recreational opportunities lend to healthy, sustainable communities and add tremendously to the region's quality of life. For an in-depth discussion of trail systems and recreational facilities, please refer to the *Community Facilities* chapter.

Funding of public recreational facilities comes from a number of different sources, to include the State of Maryland, Harford County Government, and the City of Havre de Grace. Providing recreational facilities and open space is a multi-tiered cooperative effort that benefits local citizens and the broader region. Harford County Department of Parks and Recreation continues to be very supportive of this region by acquiring large properties for active and passive open space by providing facilities and partnering in the development of facilities. The City has had the support of both the County and the State in leveraging grant funds for major land purchases through the decades. Havre de Grace is extremely fortunate to have the wealth of facilities that it enjoys.

### **Financing Mechanisms**

Havre de Grace as a City is growing. Over the past 25 years, it has annexed major land areas and now it is steadily filling those areas with planned residential development as market demand requires. As noted earlier, as of January 1, 2023 there is an estimated capacity for 1,741 new residential units within the City. The City has improved facilities – both water and sewer as well as building facilities – to meet that growth demand, but the City also has acquired substantial debt to pay for them. The City must also maintain adequate staffing to operate all necessary facilities and to serve the growing population (i.e. police, public works). This section explores how the City pays for what it already has as a municipal corporation as well as how it continues to finance its growth as new developments get completed over time.

### **Taxes**

A primary source of funding for government operations is real property taxes that are collected by both Harford County and the City of Havre de Grace. This source grows as the City expands through new subdivision and property improvements. When determining the amount of taxes owed on an individual property, two distinct variables come into play: the property's assessed value (determined every 3 years by the State Department of Assessments and Taxation) and the tax rate established by local jurisdictions.



In the case of the municipalities within Harford County, they pay a prorated portion of the County's real property tax combined with a separate local real property tax. As of July 1, 2023, the real property tax rate for property within the City includes the following rates per \$100.00 of assessed value: Harford County within the City of Havre de Grace as \$0.8413; City's tax rate as \$0.565; State of Maryland as \$0.112. As new development occurs – both residential and commercial – the real property tax base increases thereby helping to pay the cost for new required services. Businesses also pay personal property taxes, with a rate of \$2.1033 assessed by Harford County and \$1.705 for the City of Havre de Grace per \$100 of assessed value. The City also receives a portion of State income tax proceeds on a yearly basis.

### **Fees**

In addition to adding to the tax base, new development also contributes directly to pay for system upgrades within the City by paying substantial water and sewer capital cost recovery fees. As of July 1, 2023, these fees (referred to simply as hook-up fees) for a residence in Havre de Grace were \$5,300 for water and \$13,200 for sewer. The City also collects fees for various required permits to cover the cost of personnel and professional services. These include permit fees for all development plans, such as site plans and subdivision plans, stormwater management plans and outsourced engineering review, legal fees, and others. These fees are subject to legislative review to ensure that they remain current to adequately adjust for costs incurred.

All new residential construction is subject to Harford County impact fees which are designated as supplemental funding for school construction. These fees range from \$6,000 for a single-family detached dwelling, \$4,200 for a townhouse, villa or single-family attached dwelling, and \$1,200 for all other residential units such as apartments or condominiums. The impact fees noted were established in 2009 and have not changed since they were first created. These fees are collected at the time of new building permit application. Other funding mechanisms are built into government financing at the County and State level, such as the transfer tax for recreational open space and agricultural preservation, which benefit the public at a broad level. City taxpayers, through the collection of Harford County real property tax, pay for County services such as the public school and the library systems. Residents and businesses are citizens of both jurisdictions and contribute directly to both local government operations.

### **Incentives**

The cost of permits, development, and construction is borne by the developers of a building project, whether it's residential or commercial in nature. As a subdivision is built, a developer must construct all necessary infrastructure at their expense – such as its water lines, sewer lines, roadways, sidewalks, public lighting, electric lines, etc. – to serve the community. Only in the case of commercial and industrial reinvestment are there financial incentives for new development and redevelopment. These incentives come in the form of an Enterprise Zone Tax Credit Program which was first awarded to this region in 1996 and has been renewed twice to provide real property tax credits based on new employment and the cost of property improvements. The Enterprise Zone program was most recently amended in November 2017 and expires in June 2026. Other incentives within Havre de Grace include designated HUBZones through the Small Business Administration, identified Opportunity Zones, and an Arts & Entertainment District.

### **Budget Process**

The most significant costs for running the City come from public safety and operations of public works for providing roadway maintenance and water and sewer service – all necessary aspects of life in a small city. The budgets for all administrative functions, finance, public safety, public works, planning, and the Mayor and City Council are all part of Fund 1, the General Fund. Within its budget, Havre de Grace has a separate enterprise fund for directing the capital and operating costs of water and sewer. A self-sustaining operation, the Water and Sewer Fund (Fund 9) requires a substantial budget for necessary capital plant and infrastructure improvements, operations, and maintenance. The City also has a small enterprise fund for marina operations at the municipal yacht basin (Fund 8). Each year, as required by charter, the City develops its budgets through a public notification and hearing process. The budgets must be adopted by the second meeting in June and include real and personal property tax rates, the continuation of the Critical Area Tax for waterfront property, marina slip fees, and water and sewer rates. (Please see the current City of Havre de Grace Annual Budget for specifics on sources of revenue and expenses.)

The Department of Finance and its Director operate under the authority of the Annotated Code of Maryland Article 23A, which governs activity of municipal corporations in the State, and The City of Havre de Grace Charter, Section 82, which determines the role and responsibilities of the Director of Finance. In addition, Charter Section 37 governs the development of the City's budget process. Operating under generally accepted accounting practices, the Department is governed by guidelines determined by the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) and the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB). These Boards set the rules under which the City's books must be kept. Other Federal and State mandated oversight also applies to the operation of the City's fiscal management.

### **Borrowing, Grants, and ARPA Funding**

The City has the opportunity to borrow funds through the sale of bonds and become indebted for certain necessary projects requiring approval from voters through referendum. The City most recently borrowed \$15M for infrastructure funding through public referendum in 2019. Borrowing commenced in 2020 with \$9.7 of that drawn and was finished in April 2023 with the remaining \$5.3M and is being used for repair and replacement of water distribution and wastewater collection systems. Federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) funding provided direct relief cities and towns due to the COVID-19 crisis. Signed into law in 2021, it made funding available to local governments to be spent within very specific criteria. The City will be apportioning this \$13.8M for downtown infrastructure reconstruction, general water and sewer infrastructure, and water treatment plant improvements. The City is expecting to be able to keep water and sewer rates down as a result of this unexpected infusion of federal funding.

Several sources of funding through the Federal, State, and County provide revenue for operations. For police support, the City receives State and County Police Aid as a reimbursement for general operating costs – \$1.2M from Harford County and \$253K from the State – which provides substantial revenue support for public safety. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds are provided by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development on an annual basis and are often used for facility, infrastructure, and road repair. In addition, the City is consistently pursuing grants to augment

its financing stream. In most recent years, aggressive grant seeking has assisted the City in the construction of major shoreline restoration and stormwater outfall projects to meet Chesapeake Bay restoration goals. The City will continue to judiciously manage taxpayer investment through pursuit of external revenue sources while focusing on cost control in the operation of this municipal corporation.

### **Rural Buffers and Transition Areas**

In addition to concentrated development within the City of Havre de Grace, Harford County land use policy supports agricultural land uses north of I-95. This interstate thoroughfare provides a physical demarcation of the County's development envelope, providing a transition from the rural portions of the County to the more dense municipalities. In the case of Havre de Grace, this transition is a soft, but distinct edge to land use intensities as one travels east on MD 155 towards the City. Maintaining the agricultural designation in the Harford County Land Use Plan north of I-95 is desired to retain that rural buffer.

Maintaining a visual sense of separation between Havre de Grace and Aberdeen is also desired by way of an established buffer along the Robinhood Road and Oakington corridor. The forested spans and vegetated medians along US 40 between Havre de Grace and Aberdeen give a visual sense of transition between the two cities, and retaining that sense of transition in land use practices, zoning, and subsequent development is necessary. The jurisdictions of Aberdeen, Havre de Grace, and Harford County must coordinate efforts in land use planning for this region so that the beauty of the natural areas and stream corridors are preserved. Much like the Oakington Peninsula which was purchased by Harford County for permanent open space securing Chesapeake Bay access, land preservation should be a priority for the vast tracts along Robin Hood Road to retain the forested stream valley corridors of Swan Creek along this still-rural road.

The Municipal Growth Element map depicts the City's relationship to the broader region, showing the County's Development Envelope line of demarcation between rural and more urban areas. Of note is the fact that the Lower Deer Creek Valley Rural Legacy Area is immediately located north of the City along I-95. Havre de Grace is in a special place in that it is surrounded by natural assets like the Susquehanna River and Chesapeake Bay, Oakington now preserved largely in open space, Swan Creek, and protected agricultural areas. At the same time, it sits directly on significant national transportation networks like the Northeast Corridor and CSX rail networks and I-95 and US 40 highway corridors. Continuing to improve the quality of life for residents, new and old, hinges on both its multimodal transportation access as well as its location in the midst of natural features. There's a great deal to build on and to reinvest in.

### **Burden on Services and Infrastructure**

The City of Havre de Grace is a mixed bag of development time periods, where there is aging infrastructure in need of improvement and/or replacement, like in the older historic areas, and new extension of infrastructure in developing areas. Both the water treatment plant and wastewater treatment plants have been updated to accommodate new growth and development. However, the burden is largely on







aging water lines and collection systems which are subject to water main breaks and inflow and infiltration in the case of sewer lines. These are managed as they occur and active studies to reduce and ideally eliminate many of these breaks are ongoing.

The City is utilizing the expertise of GHD Engineering for continuing study of the water systems for recommended projects to support existing services, new growth areas, and commitment of sale and distribution of finished water to the City of Aberdeen. The City's Department of Public Works as well as the Administration are responsible for overseeing the management of these major capital projects to ensure that the City is able to accommodate development growth at the plant and systems levels.

Extension of streets, sidewalks, and trail systems -- i.e. other infrastructure -- are performed during the development process and are the obligation of the developers at the time of construction. Ideally, these systems are interconnected in a way that serves the entire Havre de Grace community to engage in walking, hiking, and biking for transportation, recreation, and health. In many cases, the City is actively trying to retrofit bikeways and pedestrian connections between existing neighborhoods in an effort to be fully walkable within the City and within the region.

#### **Protection of Sensitive Areas**

The protection of sensitive areas is addressed at the site plan and subdivision level with the application of state and federal law as related to land disturbance and land development. Although Planning staff is looking ahead at the bigger picture for the City in anticipation of future development, the application of regulations for protection of sensitive areas comes at the time of development review. The *Sensitive Areas: Environmental Resources Protection* chapter goes into detail about the sensitive areas that must be considered during the development process, like streams and their buffers, wetlands, habitats, steep slopes, floodplain, forest conservation, and Chesapeake Bay Critical Area.

One exception to this is the City's proactive response to requirements for Chesapeake Bay restoration at the federal level. This is part of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL, or Total Maximum Daily Load, and is related watershed implementation plans for improving stormwater runoff in older urban core areas where historic development predated stormwater management law. More information on this is included in the *Water Resources Element* chapter of this plan.

#### **Relationship of Long-term Development Policy and City's Future Character**

Havre de Grace is a model for livable communities and the City's waterfront history, relationship to the mid-Atlantic transportation corridor, its growth and housing options place it in a unique position for exemplifying the State's Smart Growth policies. These policies focus on community revitalization in existing population centers, creating pedestrian-friendly communities for less reliance on automobiles, compact development, and a traditional mix of uses. The City has many assets that make it an example

of these urban planning principles. It is paramount that Havre de Grace stays strong and financially viable with vision to drive its growth and reinvestment as well as retain its unique character and historic identity.

The relationship of the City's long-term development policy and its future character ideally will be grounded in the visions established in the first chapter of this plan, which are:

- a healthy community
- an inclusive community
- a vibrant, connected community
- an essential cultural and historic hub
- a cohesive, human-scaled, people-centered built environment
- a green, more sustainable community, and
- a fiscally-sound government

These visions all denote ideals that the City is trying to achieve in its reinvestment and development policies, connecting the historic character of traditional neighborhoods with viable commercial areas, industry, newer suburban communities, and neighboring Aberdeen. Ideally, it is a community that is orienting itself around the concept of health, whether by focusing on the development of bikeways and trails, connecting to vast, beautiful open spaces surrounding the City, or supporting access to mental and physical health care in proximity to UM Upper Chesapeake - Aberdeen. Social, physical, and mental well-being of its residents is forefront.

Creativity and the arts is part of this picture and the City is focusing on its arts resources, whether public or private. Major advances have taken place to include the rehabilitation of the Cultural Center at the Opera House in 2017 and the opening of the STAR Centre in 2022 as well as private arts venues that are developing, like Harmer's Town Art Center, The State Theater, and the Arts Collective with its mission and gallery spaces. The development of the City as an arts and cultural hub lends depth to the experience as a historic town center.

Residential growth over the past 25 years has changed Havre de Grace considerably and the City continues to develop with additional new housing projects reaching towards the I-95 interchange. With the major employment center of Aberdeen Proving Ground only 5 miles away, Havre de Grace is positioned to provide additional housing in close proximity to APG, considered a to be a megabase that serves as a primary center for science and technology for the Department of Defense. Furthering physical connections to Aberdeen, like the Baltimore Metropolitan Council's US 40 Concept for Bike and Pedestrian Improvements will only enhance connections between the cities, creating options for biking and walking as transportation. Multimodal transportation networks are forefront in this region, specifically with regard to the Northeast Corridor for Amtrak (eastern seaboard) and MARC (regional commuter) rail service but also local and regional bus transit. By having transportation choices other than automobiles, options for increased sustainability are available that can change the paradigm of household car dependency.

The long-term development policy of Havre de Grace must support its collective vision of the City's future character, where its vision is to support its historic, small-town feel. As the City continues to build out its



new neighborhoods, the City's character is dependent on interconnections between the older and newer areas, its trail systems and pedestrian connections within the City, and its retention of its historic context and scale. Havre de Grace has a great advantage over larger jurisdictions like Harford County to be able to plan at a community level where smaller-scale planning equals human-scale planning. Planning at any scale always affects people who are all ultimately subject to the policies that determine the built environment. However, here decisions can be made to benefit the citizens in a very direct and personal way to make this City a vibrant, desirable, and successful place to be.

**Quotes to use in the final .pdf:**

"What we build will impact how we live.  
And how we live will impact our well-being."

"Envisioning life in a town where cycling and walking become the norm."

**VISION**

**To successfully build out areas annexed over the past 25 years**

**Since 1998 – all the large tracts— anticipated horizon for residential buildout is 20 – 23 years.**

**How to accomplish and meet the needs outlined here – develop the goals that meet this chapter.**